

The Future of Hawai'i: Best Case Scenarios from a Sovereignty Activist's Perspective



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Sovereignty, for those of us active in the movement, is about the same kinds of freedoms Americans take for granted -- for Hawaiians, freedom to practice our traditions, however those may be defined; freedom to speak our own languages, both Hawaiian and Pidgin, and to invite others to speak it as well. Other freedoms include freedom of access to the ocean (despite attempts by rich, so-called 'landowners' to block access to beaches at Diamond Head and elsewhere), access to the mountains for gathering, access to water.

ON BEING A FREE HAWAIIAN

At the root of the concept of freedom arising out of sovereignty, as I see it, is the freedom to be Hawaiian. Being Hawaiian means, to me, being proud of my history, my skin color, my first language (which happens to be Pidgin) my traditional language, my name, and my heritage. It means connecting, in a very Hawaiian as well as 'local' way, past and present relationships, beginning with my genealogy and ending with every one-to-one personal relationship I can remember from my growing up years to the present. Being Hawaiian means sharing food (an extension of the land and of the self) with people I connect with and with people I love. It means giving, instead of selling, what I call the "aloha spirit." It means being okay with myself as I am, and not trying to live up to someone else's idea of what is 'successful.'

Many Hawaiians are happy to be Americans because the American system and capitalism seem to work well for them. They fit in to a system that focuses on I-centered living and they accept white heroes and white history. They relate to a July 4 celebration as "their" celebration of independence. They either gloss over or forget that our history as Hawaiians is different from American history, and that we, as a people, have been denied human rights, civil rights and redress for wrongs done to us. Some Americans of Hawaiian ancestry, like some Americans of Black or indigenous ancestry, take pride in being Americans because they have learned to restructure their own personal histories in order to justify their compliance and participation in the system and forget or minimize the fact that they are colonized peoples. Truth and freedom matter less than success and fitting in to a system where people of color become like the oppressor (having learned from their masters) and oppress their own. Even today some Hawaiian organizations deny entrance to other Hawaiians as a way of keeping themselves separate and their elitist status secure. But this is old news -- ideas that have surfaced in other writings and which I simply restate.

With this as a departure point, a mini-sketch of things as they are, what is the best future I envision for Hawaiians and for the Hawai'i community?

A new nation of Hawai'i will be one as far-removed as possible from democracy as it is practiced in America. The new nation of Hawai'i will be based on the Hawaiian concept of ka mea pono, absolute integrity. It is not possible to meld Hawaiian cultural concepts with capitalist/democratic thinking without tainting our Hawaianness; we cannot take on capitalist thinking unless we are willing to compromise by giving away part

of ourselves. Because the issue of profit or personal gain is part and parcel of democratic, capitalist thinking, compromise means that we must accept the fact that it is okay to make a profit on someone else's labor. In other words, we would need to lie to sell a product as being worth more than it is in order to make money on the transaction. And in telling that lie, we would immediately become less Hawaiian and more American -- more profit, more lies, more successful, more American. The cost is too high.

I think it's safe to say that many successful Americans, among them self-defined Americans of Hawaiian ancestry, take great pride in being able to "hoodwink" the unsuspecting, "one-born-every-minute" sucker who trusts that those with whom he does business will perform with integrity. In that regard, white Americans and Americans of Hawaiian ancestry are one and the same. They both exploit equally well. They both lack integrity, so they both represent an alien presence in the concept of pono in our homeland. However, Hawaiian Americans do well in Hawai'i because they have history here and can freely and more easily exploit and be exalted for it. In my experience, integrity is a word that surfaces primarily around election time when double-speak within the system abounds and Americans and American clones claim integrity. Other than at election time absolute integrity is anti-American.

With integrity (defined here as utter sincerity, honesty and candor; completeness; pono) as a starting point, sovereignty can only move in the direction of rightness -- for Hawaiians, for the Hawai'i community and for the nation of Hawai'i. How will this be done?

SPIRITUALITY AT THE CENTER

We will begin at the center, or nana i ke kumu. Hawaiians, like other First Peoples, were connected to their source, were spiritual people long before Cook arrived. Communing with the environment and with the gods/goddesses was first nature, not second. Our spirituality kept us intact and well. The new nation will have a spiritual center as defined by Hawaiians who are connected to the source.

LAND BASE

As long as Hawaiians are homeless in their homeland, Americans must be held accountable for the dispossession and continued separation of Hawaiians from our land. Because America will recognize this in the next five years, ALL Hawaiian land (the entire archipelago) will be returned to the new nation for Hawaiians to determine its best use.

EDUCATION

Hawaiian history, cultural concepts, language, traditions, problem-solving methods, teaching styles, and ways of relating will be incorporated into every aspect of life. Schools will be structured in culturally appropriate ways. As with Native Americans, the life will be the prayer and right living the basis for educating at every level.

MILITARY

The military will immediately withdraw

ECONOMIC BASE

Several ideas regarding economics have emerged within the movement, some of them pointing to cooperative, communal models; others looking at rental to the state and the federal government, at current market prices, of ceded Hawaiian lands already being used, as a monetary base for economic development. Off-shore gambling, international banking, high-quality health food farming, Hawai'i as a world healing center, and other suggestions have been put out by various sovereignty organizations. Best case: All of the above, and then some as Hawaiians determine. Casinos in Connecticut clear \$30 million per month. We could do the same. As a healing center, we have available our own natural healing practices and could invite healers from around the world to come and share their medicine. Mondragon's cooperative corporation is a successful, working model of worker-owned and controlled workplaces where power rests at the bottom, with workers; full-blown capitalism has been kept at bay and relationships of power are among the many, rather than the few. We will learn from the past and from looking at the American model that does not work for America.

GOVERNMENT STRUCTURE

We have learned from our history and from the experiences of our Native American sisters and brothers about issues of trust, breaches of trust and responsibility. The new nation will be totally independent.

LAW

Law will be about justice. Law will be culturally appropriate, unbiased responses to specific crimes. Law will not be based on English precedents nor practices by those lacking integrity. Law will not be adversarial. People will not be made pawns or objectified by any who would exploit them while upholding the law. Law will be a common sense approach to dispute resolution. Lawbreakers will have an opportunity for input on decisions regarding sentencing. Law will uphold the dignity of the people because without people law is superfluous. Law will not be synonymous with power, but will be empowering for the community. Lawmakers and law enforcers will not be above the law. Law will be the community setting its own standards and applying them equally to all. Law in the new nation of Hawai'i will be the Hawai'i community agreeing to treat all of its citizens in a fair manner as described above so that no group will be singled out for special treatment and all citizens will agree, mutually and by consensus, that law is for the good of the community and subject to change as the community changes.

CITIZENSHIP

In the new independent nation of Hawai'i citizenship will be open to all. Self-defined Hawaiians, regardless of blood quantum, will automatically be citizens. All others who meet specific residency requirements (for example, 5 years or more as a resident), who have an understanding of Hawaiian history and culture, who profess loyalty to the nation of Hawai'i, who speak the Hawaiian language with moderate fluency, who commit to maintaining the Hawaiian or local lifestyle and culture with integrity, and who love this place will be eligible for citizenship.

CONCLUSION

Challenges lie ahead for all of us. Briefly summarizing, the futurist perspective or best case scenario I can envision for the Nation of Hawai'i is based on implementing Hawaiian cultural concepts that manifest as shared empowerment strategies, honesty and integrity, and respect for the environment and for each other. At the center of all things is a spirituality that acknowledges a direct and constant relationship with akua and with nature. The dream is to achieve these positive ends within my own lifetime. Success depends on the maturity with which each of us is able to live up to specific challenges. Hawaiians must know their history. Those whose kuleana is to teach it must teach. Those who already know must act.

Non-Hawaiians in Hawai'i and abroad are particularly challenged to do the right thing, not the American thing. Entrenched Americans must be the good Americans they believe themselves to be -- to stand in right relationship to each other and to do right by each other -- in short, to internalize and then practice ka mea pono or integrity. Americans must do what they say, must practice what they preach, must own up to their support of exploitative leadership and their denial of America's shabby treatment of the poor, underprivileged and colored peoples within their own boundaries.

When those challenges are met successfully on both sides, our sovereignty will be assured.

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